

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5190

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2140

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, SN

SUBJECT: PM LEE RESPONDS TO PRESSURE ON PAP TO RELEASE POLITICAL
DETAINEES

SUMMARY:

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: IN STRONGLY WORDED LETTER TO CHAIRMAN
OF SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, RELEASED TO PRESS APRIL 28,
PM LEE KUAN YEW SHARPLY CONTESTED EFFORT BY DUTCH LABOR
PARTY TO DISCREDIT PAP WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ON ISSUES
OF POLITICAL DETENTION AND ALLEGED TORTURE IN SINGAPORE.
PM LEE HAS DECIDED TO CONFRONT ISSUE OPENLY BY THREATENING
PAP WITHDRAWAL FROM SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL IF ORGANIZATION
DOES NOT THROW OUT CHARGES MADE IN DUTCH LABOR PARTY
REPORT. TEXT OF LETTER BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT.
END SUMMARY.

1. GOS ON APRIL 28 RELEASED TO PRESS TEXT OF LETTER
FROM PM LEE KUAN YEW TO CHAIRMAN OF SOCIALIST
INTERNATIONAL, BRUNO PITTMAN, IN WHICH LEE ALLEGES THERE
ARE MOVES BY A GROUP IN THE DUTCH LABOR PARTY TO MOBILIZE
SUPPORT TO EXPEL THE PEOPLE'S ACTION PARTY (PAP) FROM
SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL. ACCORDING TO LETTER, GROUP
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IN DUTCH LABOR PARTY HAS PREPARED A PAPER CRITICIZING THE

PAP FOR DETENTION OF POLITICAL SUBVERSIVES AND ALLEGING USE OF TORTURE. LEE ASSERTS THAT MAIN OBJECT OF THIS CAMPAIGN, WHICH HE UNDERSTANDS IS ALSO SUPPORTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY OF BRITISH LABOR PARTY (MISS JENNY LITTLE), IS TO MOUTH PRESSURE ON PAP TO RELEASE "SOME TOP, TOUGH COMMUNIST POLITICAL DETAINEES" OR SINGAPORE PAP WILL FACE EXPULSION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL.

2. LEE STATES GOS LEARNED OF THESE MANEUVERS ON MARCH 4 WHEN GENERAL SECRETARY OF SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, HANS JANITSCHKE, MET GOS HIGH COMMISSIONER IN LONDON. SUBSEQUENTLY, GOS REQUESTED AND RECEIVED COPY OF THE DUTCH LABOR PARTY PAPER CRITICIZING PAP. PAPER, LABELLED BY LEE AS "DISTORTED AND ABSURD PICTURE OF THE PAP," DRAWS ON VARIETY OF SOURCES TO SUBSTANTIATE ITS CRITICISM OF POLITICAL DETENTION IN SINGAPORE. THESE INCLUDE QUOTES FROM BOOKS BY FORMER UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE LECTURER IAIN BUCHANAN AND JOURNALIST T.S. GEORGE (BOTH OF WHICH, AS PM POINTS OUT, ARE ON SALE AT BOOKSTORES AND AVAILABLE IN LIBRARIES HERE), A PUBLICATION BY A "FEDERATION OF UNITED KINGDOM AND EIRE, MALAYSIAN AND SINGAPORE STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS (FUEMSSO) AND THE RECENTLY ISSUED AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT ON SINGAPORE. MUCH OF LEE'S LETTER GOES ON TO REFUTE DIRECTLY CERTAIN ALLEGATIONS STEMMING FROM MATERIAL IN THESE DOCUMENTS, AND TO JUSTIFY RETENTION OF CERTAIN KNOWN COMMUNISTS, SAYING IT WOULD BE "RECKLESS" TO RELEASE THEM TO WORK FOR THOSE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN ARMED INSURRECTION.

3. ACCORDING TO LEE, A COMMUNIST FRONT GROUP IN SINGAPORE HAS BEEN FEEDING DISTORTED VIEW OF PAP TO SIMILARLY INCLINED GROUPS IN BRITIAN AND HOLLAND AND NOW THESE GROUPS HAVE GOTTEN THROUGH TO SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, WORKING VIA MARXISTS AND LIBERAL INTELLECTUALS. COMMUNISTST GROUPS IN SINGAPORE ARE MUSTERING THIS SUPPORT ABROAD, LEE EMPHASIZES, TO ENLIST SOME GROUPS IN SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL TO HELP THEIR UNITED-FRONT CANDIDATES IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS HERE, DUE TO BE HELD BEFORE THE END OF 1977. ONE OF THEIR MAIN ISSUES IN THESE ELECTIONS LEE STATES, WILL BE THE UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF COMMUNIST DETAINEES.
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4. LEE MAKES STRONG DEFENSE OF DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF COMMUNISTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS STATING THAT IT WOULD BE RECKLESS FOR GOS TO RELEASE COMMUNISTS UNLESS THEY DENOUNCE THE USE OF FORCE TO ACHIEVE POWER. INSTEAD HE NOTES THAT THE MALAYAN COMMUNIST PARTY (WHICH OPERATES IN BOTH SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA) HAS STEPPED UP ITS CAMPAIGN OF ASSASSINATION AND

TERROR IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA AND CITES SPECIFIC CASES OVER PAST TWO YEARS IN WHICH ARMS CACHES HAD BEEN SEIZED BY POLICE. LEE COMMENTS THAT IT MAY BE DIFFICULT FOR WESTERN EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS TO UNDERSTAND THAT SEA COMMUNISTS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THEIR OWN, AND THAT MOST SINGAPOREANS ARE NOT IN FAVOR OF RELEASING MEN FROM JAIL "WHO ARE OUT TO RECREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF TURMOIL AND TENSION CONDUCTIVE TO COMMUNISTS AGITATION, CHAOS AND TERROR."

5. AT CLOSE OF LETTER, LEE NOTES THAT SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL MAY WITTINGLY OR UNWITTINGLY BECOME A VEHICLE TO FURTHER COMMUNIST CAUSE IN SINGAPORE. GOS WILL SEND NTUC SECRETARY GENERAL DEVAN NAIR TO INTERNATIONAL'S NEXT BUREAU MEETING IN LONDON MAY 28 - 29 " TO FACE OUR ACCUSERS." AT THIS MEETING, IF SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL DOES NOT THROW OUT THE "SPURIOUS CHARGES" IN DUTCH LABOR PARTY PAPER, THEN, LEE SAYS, PAP WOULD NOT WANT TO REAMIN MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. COMMENT: BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. OVER THE YEARS, LEE HAS VALUED PAP PARTICIPATION IN THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL SINCE IT HAS GIVEN GOS DEGREE OF ACCEPTANCE IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST CIRCLES, AND HAS BEEN USEFUL IN SINGAPORE'S EFFORT TO MAINTAIN AN INTERNATIONAL IMAGE AS A DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST STATE. IT IS THEREFORE NOT SURPRISING THAT SUCH AN EFFORT TO DISCREDIT THE PAP SHOULD PROVOKE A STRONG REACTION FROM PM LEE AND LEAD TO THIS SWIFT AND OPEN CONFRONTATION. HOWEVER, THE PM HAS APPARENTLY BEEN MULLING OVER HIS COURSE OF ACTION FOR SOME TIME, HAVING VOICED HIS PERSONAL CONCERN TO THE AMBASSADOR SEVERAL WEEKS AGO OVER EFFORTS BY SOME WESTERN EUROPEAN GROUPS, AND IN PARTICULAR, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, TO DISCREDIT THE GOVERNMENT ON THE POLITICAL

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DETENTION ISSUE.
HOLDRIDGE

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